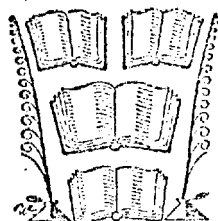


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CIA's Tactics And 'Covers'

John Barkham

IF "The Secret Team: The CIA and Its Allies in Control of the United States and the World," by Colonel L. Fletcher Prouty (ret.), is carefully read in Washington it should blow the roof off the CIA headquarters. It reveals more of the CIA's history, its clandestine operations and adroit cover-up tactics than any previously published book.

It may not create the sensation it should, partly because of the stolidity and repetitiousness of its prose, partly because most Americans are just too shock-saturated to react as they ought.

Why has Colonel Prouty been permitted to lift the lid on the CIA's inner-workings? Because he never belonged to the CIA and was not bound by its oath of secrecy. As an Air Force officer he spent nine years in the Pentagon as the official Focal Point officer through whom all CIA military activities were channeled. He was, in his words, one of the "behind-scenes, faceless, nameless, ubiquitous experts who brief Presidents and Secretaries of State." In the CIA the briefing officer specialized in the art of top-level indoctrination.

★ ★ ★

SOME of the material in the Pentagon Papers was Prouty's work. Presumably publication of the Pentagon Papers helped persuade him to write his own book. He assures us that it contains no classified material.

One of the shocks here is the book's disclosure of deliberate fabrications disseminated by the CIA, usually through leaks. These are called "covers" because they are designed to conceal the truth. The late Allen Dulles, first CIA head, was an expert in planting "covers" at lunches for prominent journalists. Dulles, adds Prouty, would tell stories which would thereafter appear in print. They were "cleverly untrue."

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EVEN Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara when he headed the Pentagon received skilled briefing "treatments" on his visits to Vietnam. "He would be in the custody of skilled briefers who knew what he should see, whom he should see, and whom he should not see. In many cases the messages relayed from Saigon, ostensibly written by and for McNamara while he was there, had been sent to Saigon from Washington before he arrived there."

The book abounds in examples of carefully planned and executed acts of official deviousness. "A parade of Secretaries of State," Prouty adds, "have seen their power and influence dwindle and be eclipsed almost to extinction by the CIA... Like a terrible, haunting, terrorizing nightmare, the sinister machine pervades every aspect of the government today." (Prentice-Hall; \$8.95).

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